

# SONY FLIP-CLOCK RADIOS

**An illustrated model history by  
Kevin Harmon-Smith**

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# Introduction

**SONY**

**There's something about the passage of time or should that be time passing that we simply cannot do anything about, so when you have one of those restless nights I find that there's nothing more soporific than to watch time flip by in the glow of a warm neon light.**

**And I suppose that's why I've always had a fascination with Flip Clocks – in this harsh bright digital age I find them a most welcome throw back to a much more gentile yet fast moving age namely the 70's. The products introduced in this decade were so numerous and varied that it's hard just to keep track of all of them.**

**This presentation will therefore deal with one Flip Clock manufacturer – SONY – a leading light in the great era of Flip Clocks. See my other Presentation “Panasonic Flip Clock Radios” for an equally innovative manufacturer of Flip Clocks.**

**The clocks illustrated here are either ones from my own collection or images I have collected over the years and I hope you find this an interesting retro journey of products from an age long gone by.**

**If you know of any models not listed here please email me on [Harmonk@Imagine1.co.uk](mailto:Harmonk@Imagine1.co.uk) ...and I will continue to update this catalogue.**

# SONY Advertising

**This was very functional and aimed squarely at a male techie type audience it seems – dig those right-angles!**



## K Harmon-Smith: SONY Flip-Clocks

# SUPER SONY SCOOP!



**DIGITAL CLOCK  
RADIO 8FC-59WA**

**SAVE  
£12.19**

Sony's elegantly designed digital alarm clock radio. The digital clock shows you the time minute by minute with matchless accuracy, and once set the Digimatic will wake you up at the same time every morning without having to be re-set. The radio section features Sony's unique sleep button, you fall gently to sleep lulled by the sweet tone of the radio, which switches itself off at a pre-determined time. Available in either black, red or white. Frequency range 530-1,605KHz (AM): 87-108MHz (FM). Uses 8 transistors and 8 semi-conductors, built-in ferrite aerial and  $3\frac{1}{2}$ " loudspeaker. Power requirements: 230v AC 50Hz. Dimensions:  $12\frac{1}{2}$ "  $\times$   $3\frac{1}{2}$ "  $\times$   $5\frac{1}{2}$ ".

**List Price LASKY'S £16.75** Post 25p  
**£28.94 PRICE**

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## We used to think all a clock radio had to do was wake you up.

## Then we woke up.

In the beginning there was the clock radio. It woke you up but was hard to read. Then came the Sony Digimatic Clock Radio. It was the first that woke you up and was easy to read.

Now there's something else. Sony Digimatic Clock Radios for the office. The living room. The kitchen. For almost anywhere. Because now Digimatics with their big

easy-to-read numbers that tell the time minute by minute come in a variety of shapes, sizes and styles.

Now that we've made clock radio reading easy, we've made clock radio choosing difficult.

Unless you want to get a Sony Digimatic for every room in the house.

**SONY Digimatic Clock Radios.**



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# 6RC-15 – the searchlight



Is it a speedo or a searchlight?

Nobody is sure what to call this but it's really funky now and most certainly was in 1972 when it first came out

1972

# 8FC-59 – Digital 24



In 1968 Sony produced the world's first digital clock radio, 8FC-59 named **Digital 24**. The unit was an analogue clock with a digital display, with individual number tiles that would flip over to show the correct time.



By 1969 the 8FC series had become the **Digimatic** but by 1972 Sony was producing a Digimatic with LED display so Sony's Flip Clocks were only manufactured for a short while.



# 8FC-69WA



The wooden era begins! Matched all those horrible wooden beds of the time.

I do however have this cool teal 8FC-69 which I have not seen anywhere else.



# 8FC-79W



Just horrible!  
This is where all the trees went.  
No wonder there are very few of these left in existence – thank God!

# 8FC-100E

And then there was this - a cool banana in yellow; very racy in red, but a bit bland in white!

One of SONY's best ever designs in my opinion!





# 8RC-25

Not sure about the advertising but this was quite seductive in the dark!



...but not as seductive as Kate Moss



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8RC-25

*A companion you can always depend on...*  
**SONY's new DIGIMATIC AM radio/Alarm clock**

You'll never have to worry about being late or missing your favorite radio program as long as you have the SONY 8RC 25, perfect combination of digital AM/PM 24-hour alarm clock and a highly sensitive AM radio. This is the ideal radio/alarm clock, incorporating the latest digital type AM/PM 24-hour clock which operates with perfect electronic precision, accurately synchronized to household current frequencies.

Only set the control once and radio turns itself on automatically once a day at the same time—you'll never have to reset it. At night, the sleep timer allows you to drift off to dreamland listening to music while the set shuts itself off automatically after up to one hour of play as desired. Every morning you'll be able to wake up to pleasant music at just the right volume level. If you're an extra heavy sleeper, there's an alarm buzzer, too, which you can also use as a reminder of important ap-

pointments.

Highly versatile, this multi-purpose set is compact enough to be a real space-saver whether on your bedside table or office desk... a complete dependable digital clock that also brings you enjoyable, relaxing music or important newscasts. Styled with the look of today in a sleek cabinet, you can choose either dark gray or ivory white. So why not get one of these solid-state 8RC-25's... just the thing to regulate the pace of daily life with a bonus of pleasure? In fact why not get two of them?

Research Makes the Difference

SONY

\*LANGUAGES: ... ENGLISH, FRANÇAIS, DEUTSCH

# 8RC-110

1972-73 Sony catalog entry – a sort of bottom cropped 8FC-100E – still beautiful in red though



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## 8RC-110

**Veelzijdige, kompakte digitale AM klokradio. Ontwaak of slaap in met muziek.**

Automatische geluidssterkte bij ontwaken zorgt voor aangenaam volume, zelfs als de geluidsknop zacht staat. Uniek 24-uurs weksysteem bevrijdt u van het zetten van de wekker. Sluimerknop. Afgewerkt in zachte kleuren en mooi uitgevoerd met gemakkelijke bediening.

**Specificaties:** Frequentiebereik: AM 530-1.605 kHz. Voeding: AC 220-250 of 220 V, 50 Hz. Antenne: ingebouwd, ferriet. Uitgangsvermogen: 600 mW (max.), 400 mW (zonder vervorming). Luidspreker: 7,7 cm (8 Ohm). Transistors: 7. Dioden: 1. Afmetingen: 228 x 114, 5 x 134 mm. Gewicht: 1,35 kg.

Accessoire: oortelefoon



# ICF-C310W

We now start the ICF range



One of the last Sony Flip Clock radio models produced in the late 1970s. Everything in this model looks more like 1980s styling. Soon after Sony dropped the *Digimatic* moniker and started using *Dream Machine*. This is a fairly rare model.



# ICF-470W

Here we go with a 3-band AM / FM / weather station – always take the weather with you!



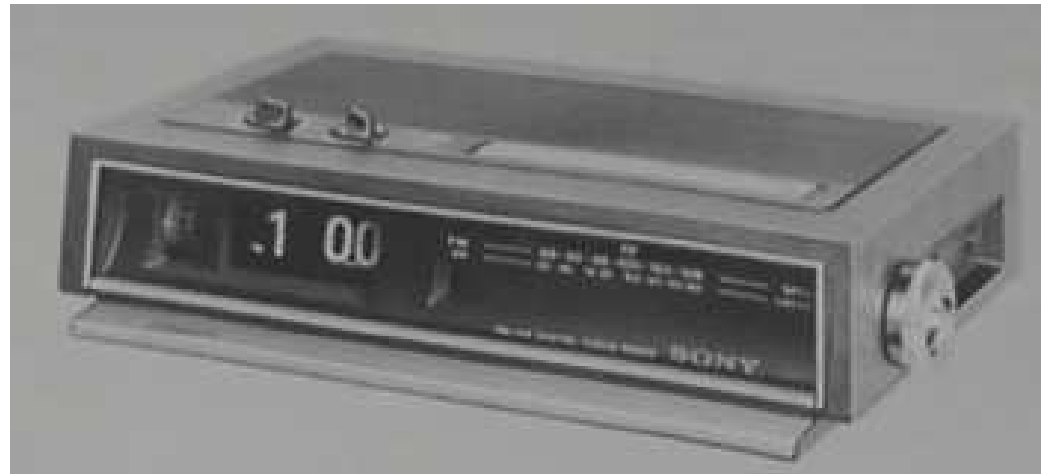
Sony had a habit of re-using model numbers and this is the later pig-ugly ICF-C470





# ICF-C511W Weather FM-AM

Quite neat and functional  
reminiscent of the Eames style



# ICF-C670W

More wooden than my old granny's wardrobe but I do like the old mechanical timer – you can boil an egg as you go to sleep!



# TFM-C430

By day or night this is a super 70's cube man!



Note it became the TFM-C450 when Sony's wood man got hold of it!

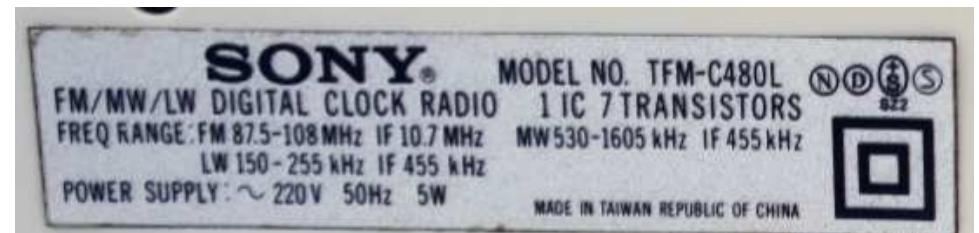
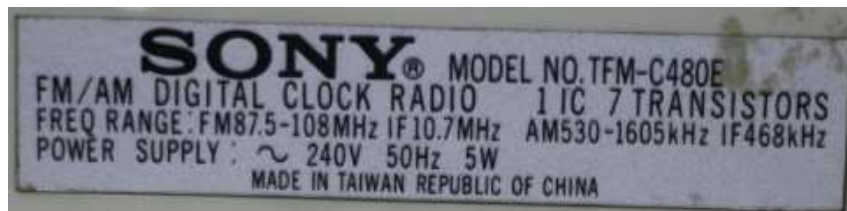


# TFM-C480E

We are getting into mass production here and so many of these were shipped around the world – no endearing design features on this one – except my beautiful decking.



There was also a C480L – can you spot the difference?





# TFM-C540W

Gorgeous design from 1975



Can you spot the design influences on the Sony ERS-210S AIBO 210 & Qiro Robots?



# TFM-C580W

Just take a look at this ugly pile of simulated wood veneer and compare it to the beautiful TFM-C540W and tell me that Sony did not contract out some of their designs – I think they asked an undertaker to design this one!



# TFM-C650W

1973-74. Nice in white and came with coloured numbers I've not seen repeated in many other models.





# TFM-C660W

Coloured numbers theme continues in this model number.



The TFM-C660W adds a day and date flip – now we are getting technical!





# TFM-C690W

As featured in the Sony 1972-73 catalog

Looks like Sony are getting Clock Radios mixed up with their TV range – now what did we say about wooden Sony Designers earlier!





# TFM-C770W

OMG I can't go on-1974 was more psychedelic than this piece of s\*\*t





# TR-C340

1973 and we go for compactness here.

UK inflation rate was running at 8.4% so you had to snap this baby up pretty quick.

This iconic album was released on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1973 and signals Sony's move into the dark side of LED Clock radios and alas the end of Flip-Clock models.



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# In Summary



Like the curate's egg Sony Flip-Clock design was great in parts with some beautiful models like the 8FC-100E and 8RC-110 – snap em up if you ever find them they will surely be classics of the future.

Not so however with many of the “wardrobe” wooden boxes they put out though which I am convinced were not designed by the same team that bought the above two beauties. There was a flash of design inspiration with the Eames style ICF-C511W but that was the exception rather than the rule.



Remember if you know of Flips not listed here please email me on [Harmonk@Imagine1.co.uk](mailto:Harmonk@Imagine1.co.uk) ...and I will continue to update this catalogue.



# About the author

Kevin Harmon-Smith started out in electronics as a boy doing a Saturday job fixing all sorts of 1970s electronic appliances – yes that was the age when we used to fix things!

His electronic apprenticeship in a large steelworks was spent doing electronic repairs as many of his fellow shift workers always had a radio or some other device to be repaired and this meant Kevin stayed in the warmth of the cabin rather than go out on the Plant on freezing cold winter evenings.

Kevin finds returning to his beginnings in Flip-Clock and transistor radios a therapeutic pastime which helps him switch off from IT once in a while – as does beer and his 450SL – equally rewarding hobbies!



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